

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1304

November 15, 2011

The Honorable Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator, Florida
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Nelson,

Thank you for writing to share your concern about HB 1355, the restrictive voting measure passed by the Florida legislature and recently signed into law by Governor Rick Scott. I agree with you that, regardless of its stated intention, Florida's new voting law will almost certainly disenfranchise a wide swath of the state's young, minority, senior, disabled, rural, and low income voters.

As Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights, I held a hearing on September 8, 2011 on the disenfranchising impact of a number of new state voting laws, including Florida's. Your testimony at that hearing underscored the burdens of Florida's new law, including the dramatic reductions in the number of early voting days, the unprecedented prohibition on voting the Sunday before an election, and new requirements that volunteers registering voters get state approval and jump through unnecessary administrative hoops or face hefty fines. We also examined the similarly disenfranchising measures that have been passed in other states this year, including Alabama, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Immediately following that hearing, I sent a letter to Gov. Scott asking him to explain the steps his administration would take "to ensure that the new restrictions on voting [he] signed into law will not disenfranchise Floridians."

To date, Gov. Scott has not responded to my letter.

In a democracy as vibrant as ours, there is perhaps no right that is more sacred or fundamental than the right to vote. I am deeply troubled by the disenfranchising impact of these recently passed state voting laws. Accordingly, I am writing to inform you of my intention to hold a field hearing of the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights in Florida.

This hearing will explore the impact of the Florida law, as well as the impact of similar laws recently passed in neighboring states.

I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dick Durbin", written in a cursive style.

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Cc: Senator Patrick Leahy
Chairman
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary